



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd on September 10, 2019 at 6 p.m.

## **PRC MINUTES**

### **September 10, 2019**

#### **ATTENDANCE**

##### **PRC Present:**

Heidi Pruess, Chair  
Rick Winiker, Vice-Chair  
Brian Cox  
Paul Freestone  
Ann Harrison  
Mark Loflin  
Alesha Brown  
Blanche Penn  
Sterling Martin  
Sandy Barnett

##### **Absent:**

Rufus Kearney  
Charles Kitchen  
Peter Engels

##### **Guest:**

Commissioner Elaine Powell  
Commissioner Susan Harden  
Commissioner Susan Rodriguez-McDowell

##### **Call to Order:**

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The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Chair, Heidi Pruess, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Chair, Heidi Pruess, welcomed all to the September 10, 2019 Park and Recreation Commission meeting. Park and Recreation Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

Chair Pruess recognized special guest Board of County Commissioners, Elaine Powell, Susan Hardin and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell.

### **Public Appearance – Special Presentations**

**Partnership for a Better Mecklenburg:** Board of County Commissioner, Susan Harden and Darrell Williams, former County Commissioner and Chair of the campaign “Partnership for a Better Mecklenburg”, came before the Park and Recreation Commission to speak in support of the proposed ¼ cents sales tax to support arts, education and parks. PRC and staff were invited to attend the campaign Kick-off on Friday, September 13, 2019 at the Carole Hoefener Center to provide information and showcase Department services. Other campaign efforts include:

- Attendance and tables at Fall Festivals
- Canvassing
- Phone banking
- Knock on doors
- House parties
- Mini-events
- Speaker packages available for presentations
- Flyers for the recreation centers
- Presence at Open Streets

Park and Recreation Commissioner Rick Winiker is serving on this campaign and will be the point person for the PRC, questions and volunteer opportunities. Commissioner Winiker will provide the PRC with a schedule of events. Board of County Commissioner, Elaine Powell, invited all to send their questions and concerns directly to her or Commissioner Harden.

### **Awards and Recognition**

None

### **Standing Advisory Council Reports and Appointments**

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**Aquatics:** Commissioner Cox – no report. The Aquatics AC will meet later in the summer.

**Athletics:** Commissioner Martin provided a summary of topics discussed at the Athletics AC meeting on Wednesday, August 21, 2019, including:

- Updates on repairs for volleyball courts and use of multi-purpose fields
- Discussion of dissolving the Athletics AC into the regional Advisory Councils. Further discussion will be held at the next Athletics AC meeting
- Revision of advisory council by-laws was discussed. Updates will be made at the next Athletics AC meeting
- Update on the proposed ¼ cent sales tax and the PRC's resolution to the BOCC
- Approved BOCC budget update for FY19-20

**Central:** Commissioner Brown reported that the Central AC met on September 16. A subcommittee met to review the County's sponsorship policy and to propose changes to the language used.

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Brown to appoint **Mike Halsema** to an unexpired term on the Central Advisory Council, expiring June 2020, which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

**Cooperative Extension:** Commissioner Harrison shared that revisions were made to the Cooperative Extension's by-laws and currently waiting on approval from the state. (Cooperative Extension is supported by Federal, State and County government.) Other topics discussed at the meeting include:

- The Master Gardner Program had 39 applicants for 20 positions. Suggest seeing if some of those applicants would be interested in serving on the Cooperative Extension AC.
- The meeting also covered efforts around Family and Consumer Science, Local Foods and 4H Youth Development.

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Harrison to reappoint **Sandy Roork** and **Barbara Locklear** to serve one additional year, expiring 6/2020, which was seconded by Commissioner Freestone and approved unanimously.

**Golf:** Commissioner Loflin reported that the Golf AC met and reviewed the by-laws. It was decided to keep the current Golf AC by-laws as is. Other topics discussed include:

- The Golf AC would like to continue as a separate advisory council and to meet quarterly
- Discussed the issues at the Harry L. Jones Sr. Golf Course.

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**Greenways:** Commissioner Freestone reported on the recent Greenways Advisory Council meeting held on September 9, 2019 and included the following:

- Bret Baronak, Community Coordinator for the Carolina Thread Trail, was in attendance and gave an overview of the organization and their impact on greenways and trails in Mecklenburg and surrounding counties. It was noted that their Trail Conference will be held on December 5 at the Charles Mack Citizens Center in Mooresville, NC.
- The opening ceremony for the Cornelius Antiquity Greenway will be held on September 28<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.
- Board of County Commissioner Elaine Powell will be hosting a walk on Torrence Creek Greenway on September 29.
- Discussion was held regarding updates to the current Greenways AC by-laws. Changes will be made and approved at the next Greenway advisory council meeting.
- Davidson Land Conservancy Run for the Green will be making use of the greenways in Davidson for their half marathon event.

**North:** Commissioner Penn reported the following topics were discussed at the last North Advisory Council Meeting:

- Eastway Region Recreation Center update; programming and staffing
- David B. Waymer
- Budget update
- North Tour: Saturday, October 12. 8 a.m.
- Appreciation for Department/Tuckaseegee Recreation Center for helping with the Lake Arbor transitions.

Commissioner Penn inquired about the Senior Citizen coupon program. Division Director, Terri Stowers, responded they would offer the coupon program again. A flyer for the program will be distributed through all our recreation centers and information will be posted on social media. Coupons can be used through June 30, 2020.

**South:** Commissioner Barnett reported the following from the most recent South Region Advisory Council meeting:

- Vacancies were discussed and four applicants are on the agenda for appointment consideration.
- Alex Rohleder provided a tour of Park Road Park and the recent improvements. Commissioners Pruess, Loflin and Kitchen were in attendance.

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Barnett to appoint the following to the South Region Advisory Council:

- **David Martinson** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2021
- **Lloyd Wimberley** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2020

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- **Rich Rosenthal** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2020
- **Sharon Roberts** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2020

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Loflin and approved unanimously.

**Sr. Citizens:** No Report

**Stewardship:** Commissioner Pruess reported the following:

- Stewardship is looking forward to finalizing updates to the by-laws. Discussion was held around the number of members and reappointments.
- The Stewardship council is working on a presentation to share with the North, South, Central and Greenway advisory councils.

Commissioner Pruess encouraged everyone to complete their by-law update discussions with their respective advisory councils and be prepared to share at the next PRC meeting, particularly regarding number of members and reappointments.

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Pruess to appoint **Angel Hjarding** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2020 and to appoint **Austen DiPalma** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2021, which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

#### **PRC Chair Report**

**Charlotte Planning Commission Retreat:** Chair Pruess shared that she has been invited to attend the upcoming Charlotte Planning Commission Retreat. Commissioner Cox felt the “definition” of open space should be addressed with the Planning Commission as that definition is becoming blurred.

#### **Director’s Report**

The following topics were discussed:

**Gwen Cook:** Director Jones shared an update on the progress of Gwen Cook, planner, as she continues to recover from an accident.

**Capital Projects Update:** Bert Lynn, Division Director of Capital Planning, provided the following capital project updates:

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## *Park and Recreation Commission*

### *Capital Projects Update*

*September 10, 2019*

#### **Projects nearing completion:**

- Barton Creek Greenway: Construction was delayed by rains in fall/winter. Construction completion anticipated November 2019. Completion of bridge and grading affecting Mallard Creek Greenway.
- Latta Nature Center: The contractor has made great progress. Completion anticipated early 2020.
- Stevens Creek Nature Preserve: Stream restoration project within 200' of completion. Pedestrian bridge set last week. Anticipate completion December 2019.

#### **Parks Milestones:**

- Independence Park: Consultant team has developed a thoughtful master plan. The updated plan will be shared November 12, 2019.

#### **Projects about to begin:**

- American Legion Memorial Stadium: Groundbreaking ceremony taking place Friday, September 20, 2019. Demolition beginning any minute now. Completion anticipated March 2021.
- Little Sugar Creek Greenway- 485 to Polk: Construction on the next phase of Little Sugar Creek Greenway in October 2019.
- McDowell Creek Greenway- Torrence Creek Greenway to Gilead Road Underpass: The next phase of McDowell Creek Greenway will be bid in October 2019.
- Plum Creek Greenway: Bids were opened last month and came within estimates. Construction will begin this fall. Completion anticipated Fall 2020.
- Walker Branch Greenway- South Tryon Street to Smith Road: It has been a long time, but construction is about to begin in October 2019. Construction completion is anticipated Summer 2020.

#### **Parks RFQ:**

*Interviews for design consultants for our next three parks were held in August.*

- Druid Hills Neighborhood Park: Benesch. Design begins this month.
- Eastfield Regional Park: Design Workshop. FY21 project will begin Summer 2020.
- Ezell Community Park: Stimmel. Design begins this month.

## **Masterplan Update:** Division Director, Bert Lynn, provided the following Master Plan update

#### **Park and Recreation Master Plan:**

- *Project scope with Agency Landscape and Design is finalized and contracts are in process.*
- *Currently holding weekly conference calls with project team to coordinate efforts, share initial data, and begin input process.*
- *Master plan, or strategic plan, will be divided into four phases:*
  - *Discovery*
  - *Inventory*
  - *Envision and Strategy*
  - *Implementation*
- *Input in project will be provided through a number of groups:*
  - Steering Committee: technical review group actively involved throughout process.
  - Stakeholders: engaged at key milestones through master plan process.
  - Outreach: Community and neighborhood groups who will provide input and help spread the word.

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- Focus Groups: Expert groups who will provide unique, knowledge-based information for master plan. Aligned with MCPR departments, Recreation Advisory Councils, and other recreation partners.
  - Parks and Park Operations
  - Nature Preserves and Natural Resources
  - Greenways and Trails
  - Community: Recreation Centers, Seniors, Therapeutic Recreation, Cooperative Extension
  - Recreation: Aquatics, Athletics, Golf, Fitness
  - Municipalities
- Public Meetings: Three meetings held at three times through planning process. Tentatively schedule in November, February, and June.

**Employee Assault – Sportsplex:** Director Jones shared a troubling report of an assault on one of our Park Rangers by attendees arriving to an event at the Sportsplex who did not want to follow parking instructions given by the ranger. With persistence and determination, Greg Clemmer, Division Director of Park Operations, CMPD and the County Attorney, made sure these individuals were arrested, and charges pressed. Director Jones shared this information because his number one priority as Director is to value our employees.

**Nature Museum Update:** A meeting was held at Freedom Park, hosted by the Discovery Place Nature Museum and CEO Catherine Horn, to discuss next steps for the renovation/rebuild. A local resident complained that the improvements will create more traffic and suggested the current entrance be closed and an entrance be built to enter from the back of the property. This suggestion would be costly and will cause a tremendous amount of destruction to the natural habitat.

Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, shared that the Department is in receipt of a zoning variance package to request a Class C buffer be put in once the Nature Museum building is complete, which will push the parking lot further away from the neighbors but require the removal of a significant number of trees and possibly push the parking lot into a flood plain. The County will be requesting a variance and is in no way supportive of the suggested changes. Should there be a hearing, Chris will be an expert witness.

**Commissioner Cox** shared that a resident had inquired about this facility and implied that we may be trying to squeeze too much facility on the footprint of this property. This is a question that might be important to bring to the attention of the BOCC.

**Blue-green Algae:** Chris Matthews shared that County Stormwater tested 18 ponds on Park and Recreation property. Three of those ponds were positive for toxic blue-green algae; Park Road Park, Freedom Park and Clarks Creek Nature Preserve. With longer seasons of warmer

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weather, this is likely to be a recurring issue. Education and signage will be used to explain blue-green algae, what it is and how to keep people and pets safe. As an extra precaution, no fishing signs have been posted. In addition, the Department is working with a pond management company for ways to help control the algae growth.

**Tuckaseegee Park Community Event with SaulPaul:** Deputy Director, Peter Cook, shared the Department's plans to have a community festival at Tuckaseegee Park on October 26 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event is being planned to encourage community engagement and to show appreciation for those in our more fragile neighborhoods. This event will feature SaulPaul, a musician with a message, and will include food and activities for the kids in the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Open Streets 704:** Terri Stowers reminded all that the 8<sup>th</sup> Open Streets 704 event will be held on Sunday, September 15, 2019. This year's event covers 4 miles between West End and Dilworth.

**Harry L. Jones, Sr. Golf Course:** Director Jones shared that this golf course is built on a city landfill and problems exist. The Department is working with the City Engineering office for their continued oversight of this property and appropriate mitigation of problems. Director Jones shared his concerns with the Assistant City Manager and as a result a meeting will be planned with the City and County to address the concerns at this golf course.

**Republican National Convention:** Staff (Greg Clemmer and Peter Cook) are now included in the planning meetings for RNC to be better able to provide support and make sure our uptown parks are used appropriately.

PRC asked for continued updates on the RNC.

**Board of County Commissioner Elaine Powell:** Commissioner Powell took a moment to express her appreciation for staff and members of the Park and Recreation Commission and wanted all to know how much their work matters. She assured everyone that she would continue to listen and advocate for the protection of our natural resources and to make sure community voices are heard. Everyone was encouraged to reach out to her with questions and concerns.

## **Consent**

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Loflin to approve all consent items, including the PRC Minutes of August 13, which was seconded by Commissioner Brown and approved unanimously.

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**PRC Closing Remarks:**

Commissioner Martin shared the following events in the North Region:

- Sept. 10 (5:30-7:00pm) – Beginner Bike Repair Class (Neighborhood CARE Center, Cornelius nonprofit; Cycle Path Bike Shop; and Davidson Parks and Rec.)
- Sept. 28 (9-11:00 am) - Town of Cornelius Antiquity Greenway Opening
- Oct. 2 - International Walk (or Bike) to School Day
- Oct. 5 (10:00am-1:00pm) - Beaty Park Celebration - volunteer invasive plant removal, which will improve the trail
- Oct. 16 (1-2:30pm) - Kids' Bike Clinic at Ada Jenkins
- Oct. 26 - (10:00am-noon) - Davidson Tour de Trees

He and Commissioner Penn attended the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration for the Southview Recreation Center.

Commissioner Winiker thanked Peter Cook and Greg Clemmer with their assistance in reserving a ball field next to the Grier Heights neighborhood for an inter-neighborhood ball game.

Thanked the Department for the support given and the compost delivery for a community garden at the Martin Luther King, Jr. joint use facility.

Commissioner Penn thanked staff at Tuckaseegee again for their help with the Lake Arbor residents. Work will continue tomorrow with transportation to help with moving.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

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